

NEW AGENDA

FOR

GENDER

EQUALITY

Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

How can women and men in developing nations become equal partners in progress? How has the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) advanced this goal of gender equality and what next steps are needed?

The responses to such questions constitute the most significant outcome of the assessment of one USAID initiative, the Gender Plan of Action (GPA). That document was issued in 1996 by the USAID Administrator, with the strong support of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA). Members of this federal advisory committee are leaders in U.S. private voluntary organizations (PVOs) who provide advice to senior Agency management. The GPA was an effort to institutionalize concern about both women and men, or "gender equality," into all Agency operations through requirements on policy, personnel, procurement, performance monitoring and evaluation.

Independent Assessment and Sources. This edited summary report provides highlights from the full 50-page independent assessment which was requested by ACVFA and funded by the Secretariat for ACVFA located in the USAID Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation. All findings and options for dialogue are based on the study team's effort to convey opinions as objectively as possible from the sources noted below. They do not necessarily represent the views of the authors. At the request of the Steering Committee for this project, the report provides options for consideration rather than specific recommendations.

- Over 500 interviews (including representatives from USAID, the Department of State, PVOs and non-governmental organizations [NGOs] and other donors, and leaders in countries where USAID operates)
- Review of relevant USAID documentation and literature on gender equality
- Field survey of all USAID missions
- Field study in Guatemala, Morocco, and Uganda (with short visit to Egypt)

The full assessment is organized into the four parts noted below, followed by a Conclusion which provides an overview and summary of main findings and Appendices with key documents and bibliography.

- I: THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT SCENE
- II: THE GENDER PLAN OF ACTION -- STATUS REPORT
- III: THE GENDER PLAN OF ACTION -- NEXT STEPS
- IV: LOOKING AHEAD -- OPTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

I: THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT SCENE

A. Progress and Remaining Challenges

There is much to celebrate as we enter the new millennium. Many nations have made significant progress in the last quarter century. The world-wide statistics tell an impressive story, from a 60 percent increase in per capita income, to a 50 percent improvement in literacy.

Impressive as these gains are, much remains to be done. One half of the six billion people on the planet still live on less than two dollars a day. In Africa, for example, development has taken one step forward, only to fall two steps back because of HIV/AIDS, natural disaster, civil strife, and other factors. The gap between rich and poor is growing, as is the gap, in this era of information technology, between “knows” and “know-nots.”

B. Different Impacts on Women and Men

Men are still more likely to be better off than women in every country – in terms of basic rights, access to resources, and power. For example, two-thirds of the world’s illiterate people are women. One woman dies every minute every day due to needless complications from childbirth or pregnancy.

What some call the “feminization of poverty” is, however, just part of the story. Women make an important positive contribution to sustainable development through their work inside and outside the home. Further, assistance programs for women are likely to fail, if they ignore men. For example, USAID missions in South Asia have learned that family planning projects cannot just focus on women’s reproductive needs; they must provide counseling for their husbands as well.

C. Focus on Gender Equality

Interviews with USAID employees indicated that the Agency has recognized for some time that the conditions under which men and women struggle to improve the quality of their lives differ greatly. These differences must be addressed in programs for development cooperation, if both women and men are to participate and benefit. The Agency has thus shifted from emphasis on “women in development” (WID) during the 1970’s, to more focus on the concept of “gender and development.”

Two recent United Nations conferences, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo (1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), endorsed “gender equality.” This concept reflects the importance of the full and equal participation of women and men in civil, cultural, economic, political, and social life at the local, national and international levels. As one senior Agency official stated, “Addressing gender requires a far broader vision of development, one that looks beyond traditional issues of economic change to fundamental social transformation.”

II: THE GENDER PLAN OF ACTION -- STATUS REPORT

A. Genesis of the GPA

Interest in the Gender Plan of Action emerged due to recent global trends and earlier initiatives undertaken by the Agency. USAID has been a pioneer, along with the U.S. Congress, in advocating work involving women in development. Soon after the passage of the "Percy Amendment" (named for Senator Charles Percy) to the Foreign Assistance Act in 1973, USAID established the Women in Development Office in 1974. The Women in Development Policy Paper (1982) and Women in Development Action Paper (1988) were subsequent landmarks in the Agency's commitment to work in this area.

Building upon these steps and USAID's expanding role in addressing gender issues in bilateral and multilateral fora, J. Brian Atwood, Agency Administrator at the time, decided that more should be done. Leaders in ACVFA concurred. Together, they developed the Gender Plan of Action, with what they agreed was the right focus for that time, an "institutional" approach to promoting gender equality through the Agency's policies and procedures.

The GPA of March 1996, together with the related document ("Additional Measures" of June 1996) underscored many proposals made by Agency Administrators since the early 1980's. Together, they emphasized the following areas:

- Commitment to greater consideration of gender in Agency policy (such as the USAID Strategic Plan).
- Increased capacity to address gender through changes in procedures (such as those covering personnel evaluation, procurement, and training).
- Incentives for performance on gender equality.

B. Status of GPA Recommendations

What has happened to the Gender Plan of Action? There has been some progress. Proponents of the GPA are especially pleased with requirements that incorporate concern about gender sensitivity into scopes of work for contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants. They also applaud the designation of gender equality as one of the cross-cutting issues that must be addressed in USAID's programs and reported annually in the Results Review and Resource Requests (R4) process. However, action is incomplete in such areas as training, personnel requirements, evaluation and monitoring, and revision of the Agency's 1982 Policy Paper on Women and Development.

C. Obstacles to Action

Why the difficulties in implementing the GPA, despite the clear commitment of Agency senior management? One major problem was communication. Less than five percent of those interviewed, particularly in USAID, were aware of the GPA. Many Agency employees, unlike their PVO counterparts, were and are skeptical about what they consider a "checklist" approach to change. The launch of the GPA coincided with a time of great turmoil for the Agency,

including large budget cuts, reductions in force ("RIF") of USAID personnel, and "re-engineering" of USAID operations.

D. Impact of the GPA

Over ninety percent of those interviewed in USAID and the PVO/NGO community said that the GPA has not had any measurable impact on Agency operations. That said, they also emphasized that the most relevant point is the fact that the GPA had nothing to do with what they had done before or after 1996. Most Agency employees said that they were already predisposed to promote gender equality before the GPA was announced and that they had continued to do so without knowing of the GPA's existence. As one Agency desk officer said, "The light bulb for gender equality has gone on! Paying attention to gender makes good development sense."

Both USAID and PVO interviewees agreed that a document such as the GPA could be only one of several means to promote "systemic" reform. It must be part of a broader commitment to gender equality that is reflected in clear consistent leadership and support from the Administrator and USAID Senior Staff in Washington and the field.

The majority of interviewees in USAID did say that it is too soon to make a definitive judgment on the GPA because some measures were instituted only in late 1999 and action is pending on others. The ultimate impact of the GPA will be apparent not in years, but decades. Interviewees stated that its impact will depend on:

- Follow-through on recent or pending actions.
- Other Agency actions to promote gender equality.
- USAID's capitalizing on more fundamental changes occurring in countries where the Agency operates and USAID's taking greater initiative in that regard.
- Adequate resources for U.S. foreign assistance in behalf of development (including concern for gender equality).

III: GENDER PLAN OF ACTION -- NEXT STEPS

What can be done to move forward on the Gender Plan of Action? This section focuses on the question of specific follow-up on the GPA itself. Despite some of the overall differences in perspective on the GPA between USAID employees and PVO representatives, the study team found general consensus on some next steps for implementing the GPA. Part III is organized to address, in order, the following areas of focus in the GPA and Additional Measures: policy commitment to gender equality, increased capacity, and incentives for performance.

A. Commitment to Greater Consideration of Gender in Agency Policy

Over seventy-five percent of those interviewed, USAID and PVO staff alike, agreed that it is useful, with or without a document such as the GPA, to maintain focus on commitment to concern about gender equality in Agency policy. To that end, they recommended attention, in priority order, to the integration of strategies for gender equality in three Agency documents:

(1) the USAID Mission Country Strategic Plan (CSP), (2) the Agency's Strategic Plan (ASP), and (3) the Policy Paper on Women in Development (1982).

1. Country Strategic Plans

Ninety percent of Agency employees interviewed in Washington and the field (after having the opportunity to read the GPA) gave the highest priority to incorporating concern about gender equality in the Country Strategic Plan of each USAID Mission:

- The field is where USAID personnel design programs and projects and where the Agency links resources to reporting of results through the R4 process.
- Concern about gender equality can be built in from the beginning with scopes of work for contractors and Mission staff and impact can be monitored and measured.
- The actual situation in the host country often determines what results the USAID Mission team can achieve. For example, the U.S. Ambassador in Kampala pointed out: "In spite of its traumatic history, Uganda is in the forefront of nations that do more than pay lip service to gender equality." Hence, the opportunities for USAID Kampala and the rest of the Country Team to work effectively with leaders in that African nation.

An interesting question about tactics emerged with regard to the Country Strategic Plan: Is it most productive to incorporate gender into many or all Strategic Objectives (SO) of the Country Strategic Plan or to make gender an independent Strategic Objective as done by USAID Kathmandu? Most interviewees concluded that more sustained results are likely to be achieved by integrating gender into all SOs.

2. Agency Strategic Plan

The second place to register attention for gender equality, according to USAID interviewees, is in the Agency's Strategic Plan. Of the options proposed in interviews, the majority favored the combination of making gender equality a cross-cutting theme and requiring integration of gender into all work on the Agency's substantive goals. Suggestions are elaborated in Part IV of the report.

Further, on the Agency Strategic Plan, interviewees stressed the need for more specific required reporting on gender equality. Many also singled out work on some of the Strategic Goal areas as models for strong gender performance (such as that on population, health and nutrition) and some, where more needs to be done (economic growth and natural resource management).

3. Policy Paper on Women and Development

The majority of PVO representatives thought that the Agency should revise the 1982 Policy Paper on Women in Development. Most USAID employees were ambivalent because they said that such papers do not affect their daily work. Both groups, however, agreed that the Agency might produce a short policy document on Gender Equality and Development.

B. Increased Capacity to Address Gender Through Changes in Procedures

Skeptical as most Agency employees were about using institutional measures to effect policy change, some agreed with their PVO counterparts on the need to try. They also agreed that it

would be helpful for the Agency to assess the impact of recently instituted measures in two years and for ACVFA to revive its earlier practice of seeking written status reports on progress toward a gender equality approach to development. According to the interviews, the items meriting follow-up for Agency capacity to address gender equality, in priority order, from highest to lowest:

- 1. Training.** The call for training won top marks, partly because of the lack of opportunities for USAID training on most subjects during the 1990's and partly because many Agency employees said that they need to know how to be more effective in behalf of gender equality. They said that they do not want gender training *per se*. Instead, they want practical "how to" material, with case studies and success stories on how to integrate gender concerns into programs (such as those from USAID Rabat, Guatemala, Kampala, and Cairo) included in sector-specific, new-entry, and management training, as well as distance learning through the Internet.
- 2. Reporting, monitoring and evaluation.** Suggestions on monitoring and evaluation included incorporation of requirements for reporting on gender equality at the Mission level in R4 and performance reports, use of international indicators such as those developed by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and increased resources for PPC's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE), working in collaboration with G/WID.
- 3. Procurement.** Most interviewees said that the recent requirements to reflect concern for gender equality in contracts, grants and cooperative agreements, once understood and applied, could make a big difference. That point has been underscored in, for example, the message sent to the field in early May 2000 from the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia.
- 4. Personnel policy.** Recommendations from interviewees personnel policy included inclusion of concern for gender equality into each employee's work requirements but tailored to the individual's job. Some also urged consultation between State and USAID on guidance for Ambassadors since they prepare the annual evaluations of USAID Mission Directors.
- 5. Full-time senior gender advisor.** PVO representatives were pleased that PPC appointed a Senior Social Scientist in early 2000, but disappointed that coverage of gender issues is only part of her portfolio. Most USAID personnel saw little need for this position.
- 6. WID Fellows program.** Given the mixed reviews on the WID Fellows program (bringing individuals from the private sector for short tours at USAID missions), most Agency field personnel in Headquarters (AID/W) and the field suggested changes (such as selecting candidates with international experience and gender expertise) either in the recently launched second phase of the program or before a new phase begins -- or dropping the program entirely.

C. Incentives for Performance

G/WID had dropped the proposal for a Performance Fund because of the Agency's budget crunch. However, most interviewees thought that the Agency should reward advocacy of gender equality. One proposal for consideration: use the annual Agency awards ceremony to present citations or cash awards for one in each of the following categories that reflected outstanding performance: Foreign Service National (FSN), U.S. direct-hire employee, U.S. contract employee, and U.S. Mission team or office in Headquarters (AID/W).

IV: LOOKING AHEAD -- OPTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

The views conveyed to the team were most notable -- not so much for what they revealed about the GPA itself -- but for what they suggested about how USAID might build, above and beyond the GPA, on its overall commitment to promote gender equality. What emerges as the most significant outcome of this assessment are thus the options for dialogue -- inside USAID and ACVFA and between the two -- on how to advance gender equality more generally through Agency programs.

PART IV provides proposals for increasing overall USAID effectiveness on gender equality. This part of the report opens with a brief description of the qualities considered by interviewees to be most important for promoting gender equality in any development organization -- inside or outside government. The conclusion: senior leadership, particularly the chief executive, must "walk the talk" -- with vision, commitment built on consensus, requisite resources and training, and clear accountability.

The fourth part of the report then focuses on two areas for USAID attention:

A. Process: How can the Agency promote gender equality through changes in its organization and through outreach to other parts of the U.S. Government, the American public, other donors, the PVO community, and USAID "customers" abroad?

B. Program: What issues could USAID select for greater emphasis in its policies and programs? As indicated in literature on organizational theory and practice, there is an important relationship between process and program. But, to the extent a distinction can be made, most USAID interviewees said that it is more important for the Agency to decide, first, what to do and then address how to do it.

A. Process -- How to Promote Gender Equality

"What one action would you take to advance gender equality if you were named USAID Administrator for one day?" That question, used by the team to conclude many individual interviews and focus groups, elicited a wide range of views on "process," as reflected below.

1. Advocacy inside USAID

Proposals on advocacy of gender equality inside the Agency ranged from keeping the status quo, to creating a "Gender Network" or a "Senior Management Team on Gender Equality." The Gender Network would connect senior gender advisors in every USAID Bureau with their counterparts in each Agency Mission in the field. The Senior Management Team would link key players in every Agency Bureau and Mission. The Deputy Administrator would chair teams of Deputy Assistant Administrators in Washington and the Deputy Mission Director would chair teams of SO leaders in each USAID field Mission. The former approach emphasizes a lead by gender specialists. The latter tries to avoid what many USAID personnel consider the marginalization of gender equality with WID officers.

2. Role of G/WID

Views on the role of the Office of Women in Development varied dramatically. Some advocated eliminating the office entirely. Others called for strengthening and changing the role of the office. On balance, most interviewees favored keeping the office but urged that G/WID:

- Provide more technical support to the field and PVOs/NGOs and de-emphasize independent office initiatives.
- Increase the number of direct-hire staff.
- Change the name of G/WID to the Office of Gender Equality (G/GE) in order to reflect a greater shift in focus from women, to gender equality.

3. Funding

Proposals for supporting Agency work on gender equality also covered a wide range. Some USAID employees called for a special new fund to help regional bureaus encourage innovation in the field. They believed that USAID Missions need more latitude for addressing gender equality because of the strictures imposed by allocation according to Strategic Objectives or budget “ear-marks.” Others in USAID recommended some variant of the status quo and opposed the creation of a fund because they believed that such ideas had not worked in the past.

On balance, most interviewees inside and outside USAID advocated some variant of additional funding. As most PVO representatives and many USAID gender specialists in particular said: “The Agency needs to put its money where its mouth is.”

4. Increased Collaboration in the U.S. Executive Branch

Feedback from the field indicated that more explicit commitment to gender equality in the Country Team led by the Ambassador could help USAID achieve an even greater impact in behalf of gender equality. The vigorous leadership of the U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, both with her role as leader of the U.S. Country Team and with the donor community, stands out as a model in this regard. Proposals included:

- State Department. Greater linkage between State and USAID policy and resource planners (coordinating concern for gender equality in State’s Strategic Plan for International Affairs and the Agency’s Strategic Plan in Washington and between State’s Mission Program Plan and USAID’s Country Strategic Plan in the field).
- President’s Interagency Council on Women (PICW). Expanded interagency coordinating role for the PICW, established in 1995, or some other interagency mechanism.
- Public diplomacy. More collaboration between USAID and public diplomacy officers in the field and Washington through, for example, increased attention to gender equality in the Fulbright and International Visitor Programs.
- Peace Corps. More consultation between USAID and Peace Corps on gender-sensitive community-based programming and briefing of new Peace Corps Volunteers.

5. Outreach to the Congress, U.S. Public, USAID “Customers” and Partners

To build on USAID/ACVFA cooperation and address the need for more outreach, interviewees proposed several options, ranging from greater use of existing mechanisms, to creation of new entities such as:

- U.S. Council on Gender Equality. The Administrator might create an advisory council for constituency-building inside the U.S., with members drawn, inter alia, from U.S. business and women’s groups. More outreach to American women in particular could help build vital support for USAID’s work on gender equality.
- International Council on Gender Equality. The Administrator might establish an international advisory body with Agency “customers” for gender equality. One key concern raised frequently in interviews with local leaders, from Uganda to Guatemala, was their desire to have more input into formulating program priorities and approaches.
- Professional Exchange Program. To address some of the different perspectives between USAID and the PVO community that emerged in the GPA exercise, some proposed establishing a small exchange program between USAID and the U.S. PVO community.

6. Donor Coordination

“Do no harm!” That, said one USAID officer in Guatemala, should be the first rule of development. Yet, some Agency interviewees said that the great proliferation of donor programs for gender equality can lead to duplication of efforts and strain local capacity. They thus suggested:

- More USAID efforts to encourage formation of donor coordination groups in host-country capitals.
- Inclusion of gender equality on the agenda for Consultative Groups and other comparably important mechanisms for reviewing national economic policy.
- More sharing of information with host governments about donors’ work with local and international NGOs.

B. Program – What to Promote in Behalf of Gender Equality

This assessment elicited a wide range of views from those interviewed and surveyed on programming for gender equality.

1. General Strategic Questions. Many interviewees inside and outside USAID raised some general strategic questions, such as:

- Should USAID be a more assertive agent for change, reflecting a bolder vision for development? While some USAID and NGO interviewees in the field were reluctant to challenge longstanding tradition, most asked: doesn’t incorporating concern for gender equality really require a fundamental transformation of society?
- Which countries are most critical – or is that the right question? Some USAID interviewees wondered whether the Agency needs to concentrate limited resources on a few countries where there are the most pronounced challenges to gender equality. Still others asked:

should not USAID, while working on a country basis, also pay more attention to the gender implications of regional issues and globalization? For example, one Agency consultant pointed out the potential value of emphasizing more gender integration when USAID Guatemala revises its regional programs on trade and the environment in Central America.

- What are the highest priority needs or issues? Interviewees asked whether there must be a tradeoff between questions of basic survival (maternal mortality rates) and issues of empowerment (land ownership or divorce). Should the Agency shift even more from focus on such traditional areas as reproductive health, literacy and micro-enterprise for women, to more attention to the impact on women from war (Kosovo) and societies in transition (former Soviet Union)?
- How can the Agency best address demographic and generational challenges? Should USAID give greater attention to the gender implications of the growing numbers of people in the mega-cities of the developing world? What of the dual generational challenge confronting the twenty-first century – youth and an aging population? Several USAID Mission Directors raised questions about the gender implications of the largest-ever cohort of adolescents reaching child-bearing and working years and the fact that the proportion of people over age 65 will more than double by 2045? USAID Rabat has developed a model program in Fes to reach teenagers, who travel in caravans throughout rural Morocco presenting hip music programs on sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention.

2. Specific Issues Relating to USAID Programs. Many interviewees, USAID and PVO alike, also saw some interesting new opportunities in specific areas related to the Agency's Strategic Goals:

a. Economic growth and agricultural development. Interest in addressing economic opportunity for women emerged as the top priority among interviewees in the field. Many recommended:

- More resources for Agency work on economic growth in general and on the link between gender equality and economic growth in developing nations. USAID Kampala's support for women parliamentarians advocating a national "gender budget" is one example of work to be replicated in this regard.
- Improving current projects on micro-enterprise with more attention to product selection and marketing and to job generation and value-added. USAID Guatemala has found that testing the market before investing in training saves time, money and frustration for all concerned and leads to more sustained job creation and income generation.
- Moving beyond pre-eminent focus on micro-finance and enterprise, to more attention to macro-economic issues that affect gender equality, including globalization and its influence on employment and the distribution of wealth and power. Some PVO representatives in Washington, reflecting some of the debate over the role of the World Trade Organization, were particularly vocal in raising this kind of concern.

b. Democracy and governance. Although women make up at least half the population in nearly every country, their representation in decision-making bodies is under twenty percent. Most interviewees believed that more can be done to involve women in governance at both the local and national level. Their proposals for USAID:

- Increased funding for work by the regional bureaus and the Global Bureau. USAID Kampala was representative of many missions requesting more support for innovative programs that help women run for political office the first time and teaching them what to do once elected.
- Increased collaboration in the U.S. Executive Branch, through the President's Interagency Council on Women (PICW) or other interagency mechanisms, to capitalize on potential for more mutual reinforcement among programs at USAID, State, Labor and other parts of the U.S. Government.

Agency and PVO/NGO interviewees stressed the need to look beyond helping to build democratic institutions. USAID must do more to address fundamental issues of human rights, from abuses in the home to those in war zones. At least one woman in every three around the world -- regardless of class or culture -- has been beaten or abused, often by a member of her own family. Reports indicate that gang rape was the apparent weapon of choice against women in Sierra Leone, Bosnia, and elsewhere. The Taliban has condemned the women of Afghanistan to blanket denial of most of their individual rights. Some representatives inside and outside USAID thus proposed that the Agency consider:

- Building on USAID research on women in conflict, to pioneer more initiatives in humanitarian assistance and projects, such as those supporting "rape crisis centers" in Africa and Latin America to address gender equality in situations of violence, inside and outside the home. One model for work in this area: USAID Guatemala's campaign to galvanize the entire donor community in that country to combat violence against Ladino and indigenous women.
- Encouraging women to play greater roles in achieving sustainable peace. The movement for "Women Waging Peace," launched by Ambassador Swanee Hunt, offers one vision for such engagement.

c. Human capacity built through education and training. "You can't build democracy or a market economy with first graders!" according to one USAID Mission Director in Latin America. Thus, he and other interviewees concurred in the importance of education as the single most cost-effective intervention for both general development and gender equality. They also advocated some possible new directions for USAID such as:

- Moving from pre-eminent emphasis on primary education to more focus on secondary school opportunities for boys and girls.
- Greater emphasis on technical or vocational training for girls and boys, including in information technology. Although USAID Kampala is pleased with the results of working with Ugandan President Museveni on the Universal Primary Education program, many Mission staff now advocate more attention to technical training in both primary and secondary schools.
- Requiring a minimum of forty percent participation by women in USAID training programs.
- More in-country training on more comprehensive programs, rather than sending a few trainees to the United States for work on one model village project. Most staff at every USAID Mission visited stressed the greater payoff from reaching more trainees at much less cost in the host country or region. Interviewees indicated that doing training in-country is likely to enable more women to participate. To the extent that such training addresses broader reform (such as curriculum change for the entire country), rather than a project in just one village school, so much the better in terms of program impact.

d. Population, health and nutrition (PHN). USAID's programs on population, health, and nutrition and the active collaboration between the Gender Working Group in the Agency's PHN Center and the PVO/NGO community stood out as a model for replication. However, some USAID and PVO/NGO interviewees made some additional proposals such as:

- Increased outreach to men on family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention.
- More participation by women in management or policy-making roles in the health sector.
- More integrated, multi-dimensional programs for women and men. USAID RABAT and Cairo both had innovative programs combining outreach on health, literacy and income generation that merit emulation.
- Increased outreach to local-level health care providers. For example, USAID Guatemala underscored the need to reach midwives in remote rural villages, whom they see as the "choke-point" in delivery of emergency care to reduce that nation's high maternal mortality rates.
- Greater attention to the link between HIV/AIDS and trafficking. Some Agency employees observed, for example, that more regional collaboration among USAID Delhi, Kathmandu, and Dhaka could help address this growing crisis in South Asia, a region ripe for the kind of devastation from HIV/AIDS that has undercut development in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

e. Environment. PVO/NGO interviewees in particular believed that USAID programs should reflect more clearly the important role that women play in protecting the environment. They thus recommended:

- Greater gender sensitivity in projects for community-based natural resource management. Many now do not involve women in either the planning or implementation stage.
- Collection of gender data in community and stakeholder analysis and customer surveys.
- More dialogue in the PVO/NGO community to deal with the perceived disconnect between the environmental movement and advocates of gender equality.
- Increased attention to the gender aspects of the growing crisis in water supply and quality. USAID Rabat is developing some innovative programs for both men and women in threatened areas of Morocco.

f. Humanitarian assistance. Those USAID employees and PVO/NGO representatives who were interviewed and surveyed recognized the lead role that USAID has played around the world responding to situations of natural disaster or conflict. That said, they proposed the following:

- Building on the Agency's already impressive record to seek out more opportunities to address the different needs that men and women have for humanitarian assistance.
- Putting in place, for fast contingency use by USAID Missions, practical "how to" checklists on gender equality in emergency situations, such as the material prepared by InterAction.

CONCLUSION: OVERVIEW AND MAIN FINDINGS

"The face of poverty in Guatemala is that of a Mayan girl," according to the USAID Mission Director in Guatemala City. Indeed, poverty in most countries often has a female face. For that fact to change, there must be greater overall economic development that benefits men and women. Those two points stand out from the hundreds of interviews, the field survey, and travel abroad.

What also emerges is that the United States must devote more resources for bilateral and multilateral development assistance. The United States spends the lowest percentage of gross national product of any donor (less than one-tenth of one percent) and less than half the proportion it spent ten years ago.

The team was impressed throughout the interviews, especially in USAID, with the stunning toll taken by budget cuts on the Agency's capability and morale. Work on gender equality (and other development issues as well) in all the USAID Missions visited is hampered by chronic understaffing. No implementation of any document such as the Gender Plan of Action, or indeed all of USAID's programs, can make a lasting dent in development without a renewed, significant demonstration of American political will to address such U.S. global interests.

That said, there is a vast wealth of experience and depth of dedication on which the Agency can build. This assessment reflects two findings in that regard – one on what happened to the Gender Plan of Action and the other on what the Agency has done and could do overall to promote gender equality. The latter is, by far, the more important of the two.

Based on that clear conclusion from over 500 interviews, the survey of over 70 USAID field missions, and field study and experience, the points summarized below could provide the basis for next steps by the Agency, in consultation with ACVFA, on gender equality.

A. Consultative process and policy review. The Agency could launch a comprehensive consultative process inside and outside USAID and policy review on its approach to gender equality, similar to the one on "Engendering Development" just completed by the World Bank.

B. General priority points for policy review. That proposed policy review could reflect the priority points underscored by those interviewed and surveyed in this assessment. There is strong agreement that:

- Role of leadership. Agency senior management, like those in any development organization, must demonstrate clear consistent dedication to gender equality as one of the highest priorities and do so by means of commitment built through consensus, requisite resources and training, and explicit accountability.
- Agent for change. The Agency, with due sensitivity for time and place, must act as a more assertive agent for change. Achieving true gender equality requires, ultimately, transforming power relationships.
- More integrated approach. The Agency must integrate work on traditional and emerging gender issues so that, for example, programs for women's reproductive health incorporate the full range of issues important to dignity for women and men (including access to jobs and the political process).

- **Innovation.** The Agency needs to explore how to encourage more innovation of the sort exemplified in the work of USAID Guatemala, Rabat, Kampala, and Cairo. Such willingness to think outside the proverbial box is vital, if women and their daughters are not to remain the most invisible victims of poverty and violations of human rights.

C. Organizational Change and Outreach. The Agency policy review could draw from the consensus of this assessment on the recommendations below regarding organizational change and outreach to help advance gender equality. Recognizing the difference in perspective between PVO/NGO representatives, who tended to advocate more emphasis on institutional approaches, and many Agency interviewees who tended to discount such approaches, some balance between the two would be most constructive, as follows:

- **Completing some of the unfinished business of the GPA.** Interviewees indicated that the five highest priorities are: policy emphasis in the Mission Country Strategic Plan, gender-integrated training, annual requirements for reporting/evaluation on gender integration, compliance with new procurement requirements, and annual awards for outstanding performance. Given the history of the GPA, Agency leaders would achieve greatest employee support for institutionalization of gender equality by putting the GPA itself aside and re-packaging the most salient points (such as those just noted) as part of a broader initiative in behalf of gender equality.
- **Developing a more dynamic program for organizational change and outreach.** Based on the assessment, that program would be most likely to achieve impact and buy-in if it were to include, not only the five GPA points noted above, but also institution of the following: a Senior Management Team on Gender Equality; a stronger, more technically oriented G/GE; a Gender Equality Fund to help promote innovation; expanded USG coordination (especially between USAID/State Department resource planners); more outreach to domestic constituents (especially women) and host-country customers; and increased donor coordination (with gender equality on the macro-economic policy agenda).

D. Funding. The policy review must address the fact that funding is a critical issue if gender equality is to receive the priority Agency attention strongly recommended by interviewees. If increased overall funding is not available to USAID, the Agency could explore ways to reallocate current resources to address more specifically the related goals of gender equality and sustainable development. Most interviewees did not think that the Agency had allocated adequate resources to promote gender equality. Many inside the Agency said that current budget approaches often preclude useful action, particularly innovation or programs to capitalize on new targets of opportunity. Further, one PVO leader articulated what seemed to be the consensus in that community: "Promoting gender equality is more a matter of will, than means."

E. Shift to greater focus on program. The suggested Agency policy review should reflect the fact that the majority of USAID employees in Washington and the field expressed the strong conviction that it is time to shift intellectual and bureaucratic gears. One senior Agency manager summed up prevailing USAID sentiment: "We need to move beyond fixing systems and get a handle, not so much on process, but on programs."

F. Highest priority strategic questions and program issues. To that end, USAID employees stated that the Agency has both an opportunity and a responsibility to address the general strategic questions and specific issues on Agency programs summarized in Part IV of the report. Those that emerged with particular salience from interviews and the surveys were:

- On strategic questions: Develop new approaches to the challenges to gender equality in the large urban centers of the developing world, from Cairo to Calcutta, and the largest-ever cohort of youth.
- On program issues: Concentrate most on economic means to attain gender equality. As women from Casablanca to Kampala said, "Money is power." Further, use education as the key intervention, but build on the foundation of increased primary schooling to put more emphasis on vocational training, particularly instruction that equips boys and girls for the twenty-first century. Read: forego basket-weaving in favor of computer programming.

In sum, this outline for a six-point policy review reflects the consensus from the assessment for next steps in the Agency's promotion of gender equality. Those interviewed and surveyed think that the Agency, supported by ACVFA, can and should help do more to advance gender equality in countries as diverse as Uganda and Ukraine, where women must join men in building of emerging democracy. It can help as well in countries as divergent as Morocco and Egypt, Muslim societies moving to modernity, and Guatemala, fighting poverty in the midst of a peace process.

The assessment team acknowledges its appreciation for the opportunity to explore the challenges posed by gender equality and, most particularly, for the privilege to meet with courageous leaders from Rabat and Guatemala City, to Cairo and Kampala. **We dedicate this report to the leaders in developing nations abroad, with the hope that it fosters dialogue within and between ACVFA and USAID on formulating a bold strategy for the future – the Agency's "New Agenda for Gender Equality" in the twenty-first century.**

(summary report, Rev. April 00)
Revised 5/5/00(7)